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# A LETTER OF WILLIAM BRADFORD AND ISAAC ALLERTON, 1623

EDITED BY

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## 1. *A Letter of William Bradford and Isaac Allerton, 1623.*

THE following letter is amongst a mass of unarranged and uncalendared papers in the Public Record Office in London, which were sent to that office from the Registry of the High Court of Admiralty. Its appearance in so unexpected a quarter is explained below. The original has been followed as closely as it is possible to follow in print a written letter. One or two contractions have been extended; the punctuation has been altered in one or two places; and the letters "v" and "u" have been interchanged according to modern usage.

The *Little James* went out in 1623 with supplies for the Plymouth colony. On her return to England in 1624 she was sued in the High Court of Admiralty by Stevens and Fell, two of her crew, for their wages. The defense was that they had forfeited their wages by their mutinous conduct; and, in the result, the claim was dismissed. The cause of discontent appears to have been that the *Little James* had a commission to capture ships, and that a French bank fisherman, who might have been captured on the outward voyage, was allowed to escape; and, further, that after the ship arrived in New England she was ordered by Bradford to go upon a fishing voyage, which the crew objected to, alleging that they had been hired for a privateering and not for a fishing voyage. Bradford's letter given below was produced as evidence for the defense in the suit of Stevens and Fell *c.* The *Little James*. It is throughout in the handwriting of William Bradford—the writing of the well-known "Log" of the Mayflower. It has no address, but the context shows that it was sent to the adventurers in London. Annexed to it are two other letters, one from Emmanuel Altham, the captain or commander of the *Little James*, the other from John Bridg (or Bridge), her master. Both of these are addressed to James Sherley, the treasurer of the adventurers in London. The address of the former is almost illegible; it appears to be as follows, but the words marked (?) are doubtful:

"To the Worshipfull (?) and my most respected loving kind friend M$^{r}$ Jeames Sherle Treasurer for the New Plimoth adventurers dwellinge on London bridg at the Golden hoospyte (?)."

Bridge's letter, written from "Plemoth in New England" is dated 27th Sep., 1623, and is addressed:

"To his aproved frend Mr Jeames Sherley at his house in Croked Lane in London."

The *Little James* belonged to the adventurers, and upon her return to England she was taken possession of by Thomas Fletcher and Thomas Goffe under a decree of the Admiralty Court in payment of a debt of £250.

R. G. MARSDEN.

2 da[1]

Beloved and kind freinds We have received your letters both by the Anne and the James, which are both safly arived here, thanks be to God, the Anne about the later end of July, and the James a fourthnight after, and by them a large and liberall suply, for which togeather with your loving and honest leters we give you harty thanks, being very sorie to hear of your losses and crosses, and how you have been turmoyled therabout. If God had seen it good we should have been right glad it had come sooner, both for our good and your profite; for we have both been in a langwishing state; and also faine to put away our furrs at a small vallew to help us to sume necessaries, without which notwithstanding we should have done full ill, yea indeed could not have subsisted; so as we have little or nothing to send you, for which we are not a litle sorie; but if you knew how necessarily we were constrained too it, and how unwillingly we did it, we suppose you cannot at all blame us for it; we put away as much at one time and other of bevar as, if they had been savid togeather and sould at the best hand, would have yeelded ·3· or ·4· 100· pounds; and yet those are nothing to those we have lost for want of means to geather them when the time was, which I fear will scarce ever be againe, seeing the Duch on one side and the french on the other side and the fishermen and other plantations betweene both have, and doe furnish the savages, not with toyes and trifles, but with good and substantial cmodities,[2] as ketkes, hatchets, and clothes of all sorts; yea the french doe store them with biskay shalopes fited both with sails and ores, with which they can either row or saile as well as we; as also with peices powder and shot for fowling and other servises; (we are informed that ther are at this present a · 100 · men with · 8 · shalops coming from the eastward, to robe and spoyle their neighbours westwards); also I know upon my owne knowledg many of the endeans to be as well furnished with good ketkles, both strong and of a large size, as many farmers in england; yet notwithstand we shall not nectlect to use the best means we can with the pinnas and means we now have, both for trading or any other imployment the best we can for both your and our advantage; but we are sorie that shee is maned with so rude a crew of sailors; we hope the maister is

[1] Secunda. This word in the margin of the original indicates that a duplicate was sent by another ship.

[2] *Sic.*

P.
J. H. Russell

an honest man ; and we find the capten to be a loving and courteous gentle-man ; yet they could not both of them rule them, so as we were faine to alter their conditions and agree with them for wages as well as we could ; and this we did not only by the capten, and maisters, together with M^r^ peirces advice, but we saw we were of necessitie constrained thereunto to prevente furder mischefe, which we saw would unavoydably ensew ; for besides the endangering of the ship, they would obey no command, at least without continuall murmuring, aleging that they were cousened and deseaved and should saile and work for nothing, the which they would be hanged rather than they would doe, as also that they would not fish, or doe any such thing ; they said they were fited out for a taker, and were tould that they might take any ship what soever that was not to strong for them, as far as the west endeans, and no other imployment would they follow ; but we doubt not now to have them at a better pass, and hope to raise some benefite by her imploymente ; shee is now to go to the southward ; we have sent to the Indeans, and they promise us we shall have both corne and skines ; at her returne we think to send her northward, both to fish and truck, if it please God to bless them.

We have sent unto you (with these our letters) one of our honest freinds, Edward Winslow by name, who can give you beter and more large Information of the state of all things than we can possiblie doe by our letters ; unto whom we refferr you in all particklulars ; and also we have given him Instrucktion to treat with you of all such things as consceirn our publick good and mutuall concord ; expecting his returne by the first fishing shipss.

We have write to the counsell for an other patente for cape Anne to weet for the westerside of it, which we know to be as good a harbore as any in this land, and is thought to be as good fishing place ; and seeing fishing must be the cheefe, if not the only means to doe us good ; and it is like to be so fite a place, and lyeth so neer us ; we thinke it verie necessarie to use all diligence to procure it ; and therfore we have now write unto you and the counsell againe about it, least our former letters should not be come, or not delivered, of which we have some suspition ; M^r^ Weston hath writen for it, and is desirous to get it before us ; and the like doth M^r^ Thomson ; which is one spetiall motive that hath moved us to send over this messenger fore named ; as allso about that grand patent which we understand you have gott from M^r^ peirce, which if it be as we have it is by M^r^ Thomsons relation, but to goe by a right line from the Gurnatsnose due west into the land a certain way, and noe furder north-ward, it will stripe us of the best part of the bay, which will be most comodious for us, and better then all the rest ; therefore seeing now is the time to helpe these things we thought it were then necessarie to send aboute the former patente for cape Anne ; we desire it may be procured with as ample privileges as it may, and not to be simplie confined to that place, but in our liberty to take any other, if we like it better.

Mr peirce[1] (for ought I hear) hath used our passengers well, and dealt very honestly with us; but we wanted a perfect bill of lading, to call for ech parcell of our goods, which as you have occation we pray you see toe hereafter, for it is very requisite though you have to deale with honest men. we have agreed with him to lade him back for a · 150 · pounds, which you will thinke something much, but we could gett him no cheaper; we did it the rather that he might come directly home, for the furderance of our other affares; as also for some other respects necessarie and benefitiall for us; we have laded him with clapboard,[2] the best we could gett, which we hope at the least will quite the cost; for lengths they are not cut by the advice of the Cooper and pipestafmaker which you sent us; for thicknes they are biger than those which come frome other places, which must accordingly be considered in the prices; the cooper of the ship saith they are worth · 5 · per · 100 · and I here he means to bye some of them of you; of which I thought good to give you notice.

We have also sent you that small parcell of furres which we have left, besides those we put away formerly; if the ship had but come one month sooner, we had sent you a good many more, though since that conspiracie raised against us by the Indeans, caused by Mr Westons people, and that execution we did at the Massachusets, cheefly for the saving of their lives, we have been much endamaged in our trad, for ther wher we had most skins the Indeans are rune away from their habitations, and sett no corne, so as we can by no means as yet come to speake with them. we have taken up of Mr peirce sundrie provissions, the cheefe wherof is bread, and course cloth, and some other needfull things withall; and with them he hath put upon us some other things less necessarie, as beefe etc. which we would not have had if we could have had the other without them; fear of want againe before suply come to us, as also a litle to encourag our people after ther great dishartening hath made us pressume to charg you herewith; a bill of the pertickulars we have here sent you; we hope the furres will defray it.

It is for certain that great profite is here raised by fishing; the shipes have this year made great viages, and were a great many of them;[3] and if we could fall once into the right cource about it, and be able to manage it, it would make good all; a good fishing place will be a great advantage for it, wher the boats may goe quickly in and out to sea at all times of the tide, and well stoed with fish neer at hand, and convenient places to make it, and build stages in, and then it will not only serve for

[1] About 14. days after came in this ship, caled the Anne, whereof Mr William Peirce was mr, and aboute a weeke or 10. days after came in the pinass which in foule weather they ost at sea, a fine new vessell of aboute 44. tune, which the company had built to stay in the cuntri. *History "of Plimoth Plantation"* (1898), 171.

[2] This ship was in a shorte time laden with clapboard, by the help of many hands. Also they sente in her all the beaver and other furrs they had, and Mr Winslow was sent ver with her, to enforme of all things, and procure such things as were thought needfull for their presente condition. *Ibid.*, 177.

[3] Thus, in the original, possibly some words were omitted.

our owne fishing, but after it be known once by experience to be a place well quallified for that purpose, benefite will be made of it by granting licence to others to fish ther. But about these things we referr you for furder information to our messenger and Mr peirce, who is a man as we perceive very skillful and diligent in his bussines, and a very honest man, whose imployments may doe us much good; and if you resolve, as we ernisly desire you may, of any course aboute fishing we think he is as fite an Instrument as you can use.

It would be a principall stay and a comfortable help to the Colonie if they had some catle, in many respects, first it would much encourage them, and be in time a gretter ease both for tillage of ground, and cariag of burden; 2ly, it will make victuals both more plentifull, and comfortable; 3ly, it might be a good benefite after some encrease that they might be able to spare some to others that should have thoughts this way; espetialy goats are very useful for the first, and very fite for this place, for they will here thrive very well, are a hardly creature, and live at no charge, ether wenter or sommer, their increas is great and milke very good, and need little looking toe; also they are much more easily transported and with less difficulty and hassard, then other kattle; yet tow of those which came last dyed by the way, but it was by some neclegence. for kine and other catle it will be best when any comes that it be in the spring, for if they should come against the winter, they would goe near to dye; the Colonie will never be in good estate till they have some.

As touching making of salte we have by accedente had speech with one of the north cuntrie, who came with Mr Reinolds (who put in here), and was his mate; he had speech with our smith aboute the making of salt pane, he douts he cannot doe it; also he saith if they goe about it that have no skill they will quickly burne the pans and doe no good, wheras if they be skillfully ordered they may last a long time. he thought we might have some frome about new-castle that would best fite our tourne for that bussines we pray you provide for us here about as soone as you can, that we may doe some thing to the purpose.

Mr Westons colonie is desolvd (as you cannot but hear before this time). they had by their evill and deboyst cariage so exasperated the Indeans against them as they ploted ther overthrow; and because they knew not how to effecte it for fear we would revenge it upon them, they secretly Instigated other peoples to conspire against us also, thinking to cut of our shalope abroad and then to assalte us with their force at home. but ther conspiracie and trecherie was discovered unto us by Massacoyte, (the occation and furder relation wherof our messenger can declare unto you at large, to whom we referr you). we went to reskew the lives of our countrie-men, whom we thought (both by nature, and conscience) we were bound to deliver, as also to take vengance of them for their villanie entended and determened against us, which never did them harme, weaiting only for opertunite to execute the same. but by the good providence of god they were taken in their owne snare, and ther wickednes came upon their owne pate; we kild seven of the cheife of them, and

the head of one of them stands still on our forte for a terror unto others ; they mett our men in the feild and shoat at them, but thank be to god not a man of them were hurte ; neither could they hurte the Indeans with their peices, they did so shilter them selves behind great trees, only they brake the arm of a notable rogue as he was drawing his bow to shoot at capten standish, after which they came away. we gave the capten ordere, if M^r^ Westons people would, that he should bring them to us and we would aford them the best secoure we could, or if they chose reather to goe to Monhegin, that then if he tooke any corne from the Indeans, he should let them have to victuall them thither (which accordingly was done, though ours had scarce enoughe to bring them home againe). yet for all this, and much more [the]y cannot afford us a good word but reproach us behind our backes.

Touching our governemente you are mistaken if you think we admite weomen and children to have to doe in the same, for they are excluded, as both reason and nature teacheth they should be ; neither doe we admite any but such as are above the age of · 21 · years, and they also but only in some weighty maters, when we thinke good ; yet we like well of your course, and advice propounded unto us, and will as soon as we can with convenience bring it into practice, though it should be well it were so ordered in our patent.

Now wheras you think we have been to credulous in receiving insinuations against you, and to rash in complaining and censoring of you ; as allso that to pertickular men letters have been writen not with that descr[e]tion and deliberation which was meet, we answare what others have writen we know not, neither could hinder ; if ther be any thing otherwise then well lett them beare their blame ; only what we have writen we best know, and can answer. and first we wishte you would either roundly suply us, or els wholy forsake us, that we might know what to doe ; this you call a short and peremptorie resolution, be it as it will, we were necesarily occationed by our wants (and the discontents of many) therunto. yet it was never our purpose or once came into our minds to enter upon any cource before we knew what you would doe, upon an equall treaty of things, according to our former, as we conceivd, bonds between us. And then if you should have left us we mente not to joyne with any other (as you it should seeme conceived) but thought we could get our selves foode, and for cloathes we Intended to take the best course we could, and so to use the best means we could to subsiste, or otherwise to returne. though Indeed we thinke if you had left us we might have had others desirous to joyne with us. also you may conceive some of us have had enough to doe to hould things togeather amongst men of so many humors, under so many dificulties, and feares of many kinds ; and if any thing more hath been said or writen to any by us, it hath been only to shew that it might rather be marvilled that we could at all subsist, then that we were in no better case haveing been so long without suplie, and not at all for your disgrace. If necessity or pation have caried others furder, your wisdoms will (I doute not) beare

with it. as for capten standish we leave him to answare for him selfe ; but this we must say, he is an helpfull an Instrument as any we have, and as carfull of the generall good, and doth not well aprove him selfe.

Indeed freinds it doth us [muc]h good to read your honest letters. we perceive your honest minds, and how squarly you deal in all things, which giveth us much comforte, and howsoever things have been for time past, we doubt not for time to come but ther shall be that good corraspondance which is meete. and we shall labore what we can to be answarable to your kindnes and cost.

for our freinds in holand we much desired their companie, and have longe expected the same ; if we had had them in the stead of some others we are perswaded things would have been better then they are with us, for honest men will ever doe their best endeavoure, whilst others (though they be more able of body) will scarce by any means be brought too ; but we know many of them to be better able, either for laboure or counsell then our selves ; And indeed if they should not come to us, we would not stay [her]e, if we might gaine never so much wellth, but we are glad to take knowledge of what you would write touch[ing] them, and like well of your purpose not to make the generall body biggere, save only to furnish them with usefull members, for spetiall faculties.

Touching those articles of agreement, we have taken our selves bound by them unto you, and you unto us, being by M^r^ Weston much pressed ther unto, we gave M^r^ Cochman full Commission to conclude and confirme the same with you. for any thing furder ther aboute we referr you to our messenger ; though in any bound made, or to be made between you and us, we take our freinds at Leyden to be comprehended in the same, and as much interese[d] as our selves ; and their conssents to be accordingly had ; for though we be come first to this place, yet they are as principalle in the acction and they and we to be considred as one body.

We found the chirugion in the pinas to be so proude and quarelsome a man, and to use his termes in that sorte, as the Capten and others durst not goe to sea with him ; being over ready to raise factions and mutanie in the shipe ; so as we were constrained to dismise him, and hire M^r^ Rogers in his roome, M^r^ Peirce being willing to releace him, to doe us a favore. he is to have · 35 · s · per month, wherof he desers his wife may have · 16 · s a month, which we pray you may be accordingly performed.

About Hobkins and his men we are come to this isew. the men we retaine in the generall according to his resignation and equietie of the thinge. and about that recconing of · 20 · ode pounds, we have brought it to this pass, he is to have · 6 · ^li^ · payed by you ther, and the rest to be quite ; it is for nails and shuch other things as we have had of his brother here for the companies use, and upon promise of paymente by us, we desire you will accordingly doe it.

for the tokens of your love and other the charges you have been at with my selfe ..... befitt .....[1] you many thanks, (and so doe they

[1] A hole in the paper.

likewise) not knowing how to recompence your kindnes. it is more then we have deserved at your hands.

Touching those which came unto us in ther pertickular, we have received them in as kindly maner as we could, according to our abilite, and offered them as favorable termes as we could touching their footing with us. yett they are sundrie of them discouraged I know not whether by the countrie (of which they have no triall) or rather for want of those varietis which England affords, from which they are not yet wayned, and being so delitefull to nature cannot easily be forgotten without a former grounded r[esolu]tion. but as they were welcome when they came, [so sh]all they be when they goe, if they thinke it not for their g[oo]d, though we are most glad of honest mens companie; and loath to part from the same.

Thus againe giveing you hartie thanks for your loveing affections and large hands extended unto us, we rest your loving freinds to use,

WILLIAM BRADFORD, Governor
ISAAC ALLERTON, Assistant

PLIMOTH
September 8
1623

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